

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A liftgate frame for a liftgate of a motor vehicle, the frame assembly comprising:

an upper frame member having an inner header panel fixedly secured to an outer header panel and adapted to be pivotally secured to the motor vehicle;

a separate generally U-shaped, integrally formed lower frame member fixedly secured attached to the upper frame member, the lower frame member including spaced apart vertical segments and a horizontal segment extending between the vertical segments for supporting the liftgate as the liftgate opens and closes; and

a reinforcement member having a first portion fixedly secured to the inner header panel and the outer header panel, the reinforcement member having a second portion fixedly secured to one of the vertical segments for reinforcing the attachment between the upper and lower frame members, ~~wherein the reinforcement member includes a substantially "L"-shaped cross-section.~~

2 - 8 (Cancelled)

9. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 1 wherein the first portion of the reinforcement member extends substantially perpendicularly from the second portion.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 1 wherein the lower frame is tubular, the second portion of the reinforcement member being at least partially positioned within the tubular lower frame.

12. (Currently amended) A liftgate frame for a liftgate of a motor vehicle, the frame assembly comprising:

an upper frame member having an inner header panel fixedly secured to an outer header panel and adapted to be pivotally secured to the motor vehicle;

a generally U-shaped, integrally formed lower frame member fixedly secured to the upper frame member, the lower frame member including spaced apart vertical segments and a horizontal segment extending between the vertical segments for supporting the liftgate as the liftgate opens and closes; and

a reinforcement member having a first portion fixedly secured to and overlapping one of the inner header panel and the outer header panel, the reinforcement member having a second portion fixedly secured to one of the vertical segments for reinforcing the attachment between the upper and lower frame members, ~~wherein the lower frame is tubular, the liftgate frame further including wiring extending through the tubular lower frame.~~

13. (Currently amended) A liftgate frame for a motor vehicle liftgate, the liftgate including a window and a tailgate pivotally coupled to the liftgate frame, the window and tailgate each being moveable between open and closed positions, the liftgate frame comprising:

an upper frame member adapted to be pivotally coupled to the motor vehicle;

a separate substantially U-shaped, one piece, tubular lower frame member having terminal ends fixed to the upper frame member forming an uninterrupted ring surrounding an opening, the ring being moveable between open and closed positions;

a window hinge coupled to the liftgate frame and adapted to rotatably couple the window to the liftgate frame;

a tailgate hinge coupled to the liftgate frame and adapted to rotatably couple the tailgate to the liftgate frame, wherein the opening is adapted to be unobstructed when the window and the tailgate are each in the open position.

14. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 13 wherein the upper frame member includes spaced apart vertically extending end segments forming a portion of the ring.

15. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 14 wherein the upper frame member includes an inner header panel fixed to an outer header panel.

16. (Currently amended) The liftgate frame of claim 15 further including a reinforcement member having a first portion fixedly secured to and overlapping the inner header panel and the outer header panel, the reinforcement member having a second portion fixedly secured to and overlapping the lower frame member for reinforcing the attachment between the upper and lower frame members.

17. (Currently amended) The liftgate frame of claim 16 wherein ~~the lower frame is tubular~~, the second portion of the reinforcement member ~~being~~ is at least partially positioned within the tubular lower frame.

18. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 17 wherein the first portion of the reinforcement member extends substantially perpendicularly from the second portion.

19. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 13 further including an electronic module coupled to the liftgate and adapted to output a signal indicative of the position of the liftgate frame, the window and the tailgate.

20. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 13 further including wiring extending through the tubular lower frame.

21. (Currently amended) A liftgate frame for a motor vehicle liftgate having a window and a tailgate moveable relative to the liftgate frame between open and closed positions, the liftgate frame comprising:

an upper frame member having an inner header panel with a substantially constant thickness fixedly secured to an outer header panel [[and]] with a substantially constant thickness, the upper frame member being adapted to be pivotally secured to the motor vehicle;

a separate generally U-shaped, ~~integrally formed~~ one-piece lower frame member fixedly secured to the upper frame member, the lower frame member including spaced apart vertical segments and a horizontal segment extending between the vertical segments for supporting the liftgate as the liftgate opens and closes; and

a tailgate hinge coupled to the horizontal segment of the lower frame member and adapted to pivotally interconnect the tailgate and the lower frame member.

22. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 21 further including a window hinge coupled to the liftgate frame and adapted to pivotally interconnect the window and the upper frame member.

23. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 22 wherein the tailgate hinge and the window hinge are adapted to allow the window and the tailgate to rotate about parallel axes.

24. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 23 further including a frame latch fixed to the horizontal segment of the lower frame member.

25. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 21 further including a reinforcement member having a first portion fixedly secured to the inner header panel and the outer header panel, the reinforcement member having a second portion fixedly secured to one of the vertical segments for reinforcing the attachment between the upper and lower frame members, wherein the reinforcement member includes a substantially "L"-shaped cross-section.

26. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 21 wherein the lower frame is tubular, the second portion of the reinforcement member being at least partially positioned within the tubular lower frame.

27. (Previously presented) The liftgate frame of claim 21 wherein the lower frame is tubular, the liftgate frame further including wiring extending through the tubular lower frame.

28. (Previously presented) A liftgate frame as set forth in claim 21 wherein the lower frame member is formed by tubular hydroforming of a metal material.

29. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 1 wherein the reinforcement member includes a substantially "L"-shaped cross-section.

30. (New) The liftgate frame of claim 12 wherein the lower frame is tubular, the liftgate frame further including wiring extending through the tubular lower frame.